

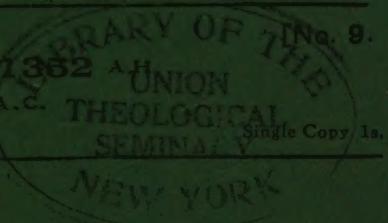
Islamic Review

Founded by the Late AL-HAJ KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN.

XXI.]

JAMĀDA 'TH-THĀNIYA 1352 A.C.
SEPTEMBER, 1933

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Mr. Salim R. De Grey Firth

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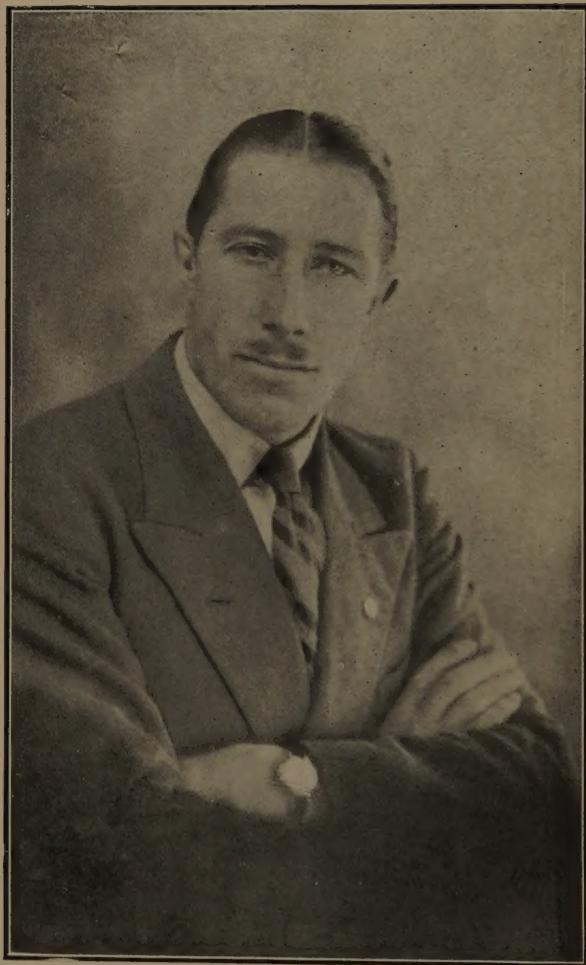
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NOV 22 1933



MR. SALIM R. DE GREY FIRTH.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
شَهَادَةُ مُحَمَّدٍ وَّالْكَبِيرِ

THE
ISLAMIC REVIEW

JUMĀDA 'TH THĀNIYA 1352 A.H.

VOL. XXI.

SEPTEMBER, 1933 A.C.

No. 9.

WHY I CONFESS ISLAM

To Africa, that land of sunshine, of the whispering palm and the tropic moon, where the pad-pad of naked feet on sandy soil and the full-throated laughter of happy people is ever in one's ears, I give my thanks.

When I first landed on its hospitable shores I was an ordinary callow English youth, content with the pleasures of the moment and with no thought of the Life to come, but when, five years later, I returned to England for the third time, it and its people had given me the clue to happiness. And happiness, to me, is spelt ISLAM—Islam, the only true faith. The only faith which can be accepted by any thinking individual, and the faith which alone can lead the suffering world towards the Light.

During my first tour in Africa I was ashamed to notice the way in which the coloured population was treated by

the Europeans, and to find that the Christian doctrine of the brotherhood of man was so completely ignored. I could not help reflecting on the unpleasant shock which awaited the native Christian converts when they left the shelter of the mission to take their place among their fellow Christians. Instead of the respect, sympathy and understanding which is always due to another soul and which, according to the teaching they had received, they had every right to expect, they would find, if such a thing were possible, that they had increased the antagonism of their co-religionists, and that they stood indeed further without the Christian fold than their pagan brothers.

In direct contrast was the very evident family spirit of the African Muslims, and the term "Muslim nation" took on a new significance for me. What could it be, I wondered, that bound them so closely together, when we Christians, in spite of our wonderful ideals, were as strangers to one another and ever ready to fly at one another's throats ? Alas ! At that time I had not read the Glorious Qur-ān ; that wonderful Divine Revelation that could move the strongest man to tears. I did not know that the magnificent example of Muhammad (May the blessings of Allah be upon him) shone like a beacon through the Muslim world, guiding his followers on the right path.

I had been brought up in the Christian faith ; I had been confirmed, and attended Communion ; I had blindly accepted the doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement and the Divinity of Christ. But when I gave the matter a little thought I found that I could not believe in these dogmas. I was unable to accept them as the Word of God. And when I saw that Christianity was accorded lip service only by its followers ; that when ethical and moral principles came into conflict with economics, the latter invariably prevailed ; that when, in short, one's religion

THE POSITION OF ABRAHAM IN ISLAM

was apt to interfere with dividends, religion went by the board, then I cast around to find a faith that I could sincerely accept.

Imagine, if you can, my delight when I discovered that everything I read about Islam coincided with my own views, and that the teachings of Our Holy Prophet (Allah bless and keep him), answered all my questions. *Surah* after *surah* of the Holy Qur-án revealed to me the Truth, and I gave thanks to *Allah* that He had, in His mercy, accepted my Surrender.

SALIM R. DE GREY FIRTH.

THE POSITION OF ABRAHAM IN ISLAM

BY AL-HAJJ HAFIZ GHULAM SARWAR, M.A. (PUNJAB),
B.A. (CANTAB).

(Translator of the Holy Qur-án).

To us, who are born Muslims, the position of Abraham, in Islam, is quite clear, but critics of Islam in Europe and America have seldom if ever paid any attention to the pre-eminent position occupied by him. If they had done so from the beginning, a great deal of wrangling, misapprehension and trouble might have been avoided. But the critics of Islam in the West have up till now been mostly fanatical missionaries of the so-called Christian religion, and it has never been to their interest to represent Islam as it is. The truth, however, is that God Almighty sent the Holy Prophet Muhammad to revive and revitalise the faith of Abraham and to reunite the discordant elements of humanity under the banner of Islam—*the only one religion from the beginning of the world to its end.*

Before I go any further, I might say that every one either believes himself to be obeying the laws of God,

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or pretends to be doing so ; and as Islam means obedience to the laws of God every one who is religious is really or nominally a Muslim. In fact, in my journeys round the world, wherever I had the opportunity of explaining the true meaning of the word Islam and the faith expressed thereby, I was always told by intelligent men that if that was so they were also Muslims. I do really hope that one day the majority of the men of understanding would be really Muslims.

But my object in this brief article is to point to the student of Islam in the West how broad are the foundations of our religion and how catholic are its principles. If Islam was adopted as the universal religion of the world, there would be no anti-Jewish or pro-Jewish movements in the world ; there would be no fights among the Protestants and Catholics in the camp of Christianity ; there would be no racial antipathies among the nations of the greater part of the world. They would all be united under the faith of their father Abraham.

Verses of the Holy Qur-án relating to this subject are so numerous that it is not convenient to quote them all or to comment upon them, and the position is so clear to us, born Muslims, that I only propose to give a few specimens and to make such comments on them as are quite obvious. Says the Holy Qur-án :—

Say : As to me my Lord has guided me to the Right Path : And upright faith, the religion of Abraham the single-minded, And he was not of the pagans.¹

And again :—

O ye who believe ; bow, and bow down, and serve your Lord and do good deeds that you may be successful. And strive in God's (path), the striving that is His due. He has chosen you and has not put upon you any hardship in the religion—the faith of your father Abraham. He has called you Muslims from before, And also in this (Qur-án).²

¹ Chapter 6, v. 162.

² Chapter 22, vv. 77-78.

THE POSITION OF ABRAHAM IN ISLAM

These quotations are quite sufficient to show that Abraham was a Muslim, that he was single-minded and that he was not one of the pagans. The object of this repeated iteration in the Holy Qur-án is to call the Arabs as well as the non-Arabs to the faith of their Patriarch Abraham, and to point out that his religion was a purely Unitarian one, and that all the sects and so-called religions which had sprung up after his death were either untrue or perversions of the true faith of Islam. This argument applies to all the different religions of the world with equal force because God has repeatedly announced in the Holy Qur-án that He has sent a messenger to every nation with the message of Islam, and that Muhammad is not a new-fangled prophet. But I am confining this article, as far as possible, to the fact that the Holy Prophet Muhammad is repeatedly and strictly enjoined to follow the faith of Abraham. Says the Holy Qur-án :—

Surely Abraham was a leader (of mankind), obedient to God, single-minded. And he was not of the pagans. He was thankful for His blessings ; He (God) chose him and guided him towards the Right Faith. And we gave him food in this world ; And most surely in the Future, he is of the good. Then We commanded thee, saying : ‘Follow thou the faith of Abraham, the single minded ; for he was not of the pagans.’

Nothing could be more emphatical than these verses just quoted above to show to the critics of Islam that in fighting Islam and rejecting it they are really and truly fighting their own religion which has its origin in the faith of Abraham, for the foundation of the Old and New Testaments rests upon the faith of Abraham. The greatest Reformer that God ever sent down to mankind was His messenger Muhammad, and those who reject him are the most reactionary creatures of God. In this 20th Century of scientific and historic research, it behoves all men of true faith to go back to the pure fountain of truth which has its source in the religion of Abraham. If the Western people do not like to be called Muhammadans (as they

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wrongly call us) they should devise some other name for their religion on the condition that it be the religion of their father Abraham and not any doctrine poured out of the mouth of a so-called saint or rabbi.

The invitation of the Holy Qur-án to all those who believe in God and revelation stands to-day as it did over thirteen hundred years ago :—

Say : O ye people of the Book ; come to a saying, the same for us and for you : That we serve none but God, and that some of us take not others as lords besides God. But if they turn back, then say (you Muslims !) ‘Bear ye witness that we are Muslims.’ O ye people of the Book, why do you argue about Abraham—whilst the Torah and the Evangel were not sent down till after him ; Do you not understand ? You are the people who argued about what you had some knowledge, then why do you argue about what you have no knowledge ? And God knows, and you know not, Abraham was not a Jew, nor a Christian, but he was single-minded, obedient (Muslim), and he was not of the pagans. Surely, the most alike to Abraham of men are those who follow him, and this Prophet, and those who believe, and God is the Patron of the believers.—Chapter 16, vv. 120—123.

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THE LORD OF LIFE

THE LORD OF LIFE

Praise be to God, the Ever-living.

Beauty of form and face may not endure !

Be not the captive of a passing flow'r,

How fair

So e'er !

Wealth may not last ! tho' luxury and ease

Enwrap thee round securely, what of death ?

Death taketh all !

Death winneth all !

Bethink thee, then, of what may live

For ever, while the endless eons roll,

Ageless, eternal,

Sorrowless, undimm'd.

What, when the world hath pass'd,

The sun grown cold, what then shall be ?

Know that ONE dieth not, ONE liveth yet,

Lord of all life, One Living Lord,

Merciful, Eternal,

Merciful and Mighty.

If thou wouldst live, thy spirit shall take life

From the Life-Giver by His Grace and Pow'r.

All else is vain ! remember this, vain ! vain !

Thy struggles but a frustrate agony—a pain

Revolving back upon itself again,

Pitiless, heedless, needless, in vain !

The way of life is righteousness,

And righteousness within the BOOK is writ

In letters of eternal life and love.

Go read !

Take heed !

And joy shall go beside thee in the path of peace.

W. B. BASHYR PICKARD.

ISLAM VERSUS CHRISTIANITY

[We have repeatedly commented on the change of attitude of Western people towards Islam. We print below the text of Rev. Canon Isaac Taylor's Address, as reported in the *Times* of London, which he delivered at the Church Congress of England. It lends support to our assertion that at last the Western people are being compelled by circumstances to admit the superiority of Islam, and to take a sympathetic view of things Islamic—ED. I. R.]

Over a large portion of the world, Islam as a missionary religion is more successful than Christianity. Not only are the Moslem converts from paganism more numerous than the Christian converts, but Christianity in some regions is actually receding before Islam, while attempts to proselytize Muhammadan nations are notoriously unsuccessful. We not only do not gain ground, but even fail to hold our own. The faith of Islam already extends from Morocco to Java, from Zanzibar to China, and is spreading across Africa with giant strides. It has acquired a footing on the Congo and the Zambesi, while Uganda, the most powerful of the Negro States, has just become Muhammadan. In India western civilization, which is sapping Hinduism, only prepares the way for Islam. Of the 255 millions in India, 50 millions are already Moslem, and of the whole population of Africa, more than half. It is not the first propagation of Islam that has to be explained; but it is the permanency with which it retains its hold upon its converts. Christianity is less tenacious in its grasp. An African tribe once converted to Islam never reverts to paganism, and never embraces Christianity.... Islam has done more for civilization than Christianity. Take, for example, the statements of English officials or of lay travellers as to the practical results of Islam. When Muhammadanism is embraced by a negro tribe, paganism, devil-worship, fetishism, cannibalism, human sacrifice, infanticide, witchcraft at once disappear. The natives begin to dress, filth is replaced by cleanliness, and they acquire personal dignity and self-respect. Hospitality

ISLAM VERSUS CHRISTIANITY

becomes a religious duty, drunkenness becomes rare, gambling is forbidden, immodest dances and the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes ceases, female chastity is regarded as a virtue, industry replaces idleness, license gives place to law, order and sobriety prevail, blood feuds, cruelty to animals and to slaves are forbidden. A feeling of humanity, benevolence and brotherhood is inculcated. Polygamy and slavery are regulated and their evils are restrained. Islam, above all, is the most powerful total abstinence association in the world, whereas the extension of European trade means the extension of drunkenness and vice, and the degradation of the people ; while Islam introduces a civilization of no low order, including a knowledge of reading and writing, decent clothing, personal cleanliness, veracity and self-respect. Its restraining and civilizing effects are marvellous.

How little have we to show for the vast sums of money and all the precious lives lavished upon Africa ! Christian converts are reckoned by thousands. Muslim converts by millions. These are the stern facts we have to face. They are extremely unpleasant facts : it is folly to ignore them. We ought to begin by recognizing the fact that Islam is not an anti-Christian faith, but a half-Christian faith. Islam was a replica of Abraham and Moses, with Christian elements. Judaism was exclusive, Islam is cosmopolitan—not like Judaism, confined to one race, but extended to the whole world. Muslims acknowledge four great teachers—Abraham, the friend of God ; Moses, the prophet of God ; Jesus, the word of God ; and Muhammad the apostle of God. There is nothing in the teaching of Muhammad antagonistic to Christianity. It is mid-way between Judaism and Christianity. The reformed Judaism swept so swiftly over Africa and Asia because the African and Syrian doctors had substituted metaphysical dogmas for the religion of Christ. They tried to combat licentiousness by celibacy and virginity.

Seclusion from the world was the road to holiness, and dirt was the characteristic of monkish sanctity. The people were practically polytheists, worshipping a crowd of martyrs, saints and angels ; Islam swept away this mass of corruption and superstitions. It was a revolt against empty theological polemics ; it was a masculine protest against the exaltation of celibacy as a crown of piety. It brought out the fundamental dogma of religion—the unity and greatness of God. It replaced monkiness by manliness. It gave hope to the slave, brotherhood to mankind, and recognition to the fundamental facts of human nature.

The virtues which Islam inculcates are what the lower races can be brought to understand—temperance, cleanliness, chastity, justice, fortitude, courage, benevolence, hospitality, veracity and resignation. They can be taught to cultivate the four cardinal virtues, and to abjure the seven deadly sins. The Christian ideal of the brotherhood of man is the highest, but Islam preaches a practical brotherhood—the social equality of all Muslims. This is the great bribe which Islam offers. The convert is admitted at once to an exclusive social caste : he becomes a member of a vast confraternity of 150,000,000. A Christian convert is not regarded as a social equal, but the Muslim brotherhood is a reality. We have over much dear brethren in the reading desk, but over little in daily life. True, the Korán offered a material paradise, but the privileges attained in this world are a more potent motive.

The two great practical difficulties in the way of the conversion of Africa are polygamy and domestic slavery. Muhammad, like Moses, did not prohibit them ; that would have been impossible ; but he endeavoured to mitigate their evils. Slavery is no part of the creed of Islam. It was tolerated as a necessary evil by Muhammad as it

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was by Moses and St. Paul. In the hands of the Muslim it is a very mild institution, far milder than negro slavery in the United States. Polygamy is a more difficult question. Moses did not prohibit it. It was practised by David, and it is not directly forbidden in the New Testament. Muhammad limited the unbounded licence of polygamy; it is the exception rather than the rule in the most civilized Muslim lands, European Turkey, Algiers and Egypt. Polygamy, with all its evils, has its counter-balancing advantages. It has abolished female infanticide and gives every woman a legal protector. Owing to polygamy, Moslem countries are free from professional outcasts, a greater reproach to Christendom than polygamy to Islam. The strictly regulated polygamy of Muslim lands is infinitely less degrading to women and less injurious to men than the promiscuous polyandry which is the curse of Christian cities and which is absolutely unknown in Islam. The polyandrous English are not entitled to cast stones at polygamous Muslims. Let us first pluck out the beam from our own eye before we meddle with the mote in our brother's eye. The four evils of Muslim lands—polygamy, slavery, concubinage and license of divorce—are no exclusive reproach to Islam. Within our own memory, if not now, they have all prevailed in aggravated forms in the United States—a land nominally Christian, peopled by a race of English brotherhood.

Let us remember that in some respects Muslim morality is better than our own. In resignation to God's will, in temperance, charity, veracity and in the brotherhood of believers, they set us a pattern we should do well to follow. Islam has abolished drunkenness, gambling and prostitution—the three curses of Christian lands.

RAMADHAN

By SALIM R. DE GREY FIRTH

Wealth and children are but an ornament of the life of the World; but the good deeds which endure are better in thy Lord's sight for reward, and better in respect of hope,—XVIII, 47.

And surely one of the best of good deeds is the keeping of the fast of Ramadhan. A learned Christian theologian has said that "true and ideal religion is the training of the human will into obedience to the perfect will of God"; and an accomplished Jewish Rabbi has stated that the intention of the various precepts and practices of the great faiths of the world is to train man's will into practical submission to God. In the Holy Qur-án it is revealed that fasting is prescribed for us that we may ward off evil, and there can be no doubt that this is the primary purpose of the fast. That by the subjugation of the desires of the flesh and by the strict training of the will to perform acts which are against one's natural inclinations we may attain complete mental control and eschew evil, living for Allah alone. Muhammad (Allah bless and keep him) acted on this principle, and used to retire to a cave in the desert, and it was during the month of Ramadhan that he received the first Divine Revelation, and was visited by the Archangel Gabriel. As a natural consequence, the month of Ramadhan was, is and always will be, held most sacred by all Muslims as the month in which the Criterion for mankind was revealed, but the strict keeping of this fast in accordance with the example of our Holy Prophet (May the blessings of Allah be upon him) and as an honour to his memory must not blind us to the fact that the first principle of the fast is the bringing of an individual Muslim closer to his Lord. Each and every Muslim, who strictly observes this ordinance (and where, indeed, can we find a Muslim who does not observe it?) takes a definite step forward in the right direction, and, as each year passes,

THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

draws nearer to his goal. At the great ceremony of *Id-ul-Fitr* he who has religiously fulfilled his obligations may look back with pride on his achievement, and give thanks to Allah for having given him the strength to resist temptation.

Let us, then, all pray that we shall not falter in this test, and say together : " Allah willing, Thou shalt find me of the steadfast,"—XXXVII, 102.

THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

By M. ABDUS-SALAM KHAN, M.A., LL.B.

Islam has been the religion of the world since its creation. Islam has been the religion of Adam, of Abraham, of Moses, of Jesus, of Zoroaster, of Krishna and of Buddha. In fact Islam has been the religion of all reformers and torch-bearers of mankind. For, what is Islam ? Islam, which literally means entering into a state of peace, is nothing but a belief in two cardinal principles, *viz.*, belief in the Unity of God and in the Brotherhood of Man. These are the two fundamental and basic principles which are the essence of Islam and the source of all its beliefs and practices. Reformers of all times have invariably preached these two principles, and this is Islam in all its purity and simplicity. Therefore, we as Muslims believe them all to be prophets of Islam, and as such we are required to make no distinction between them.

But one may reasonably ask : why do we find so much difference between the religions of a Muslim, of a Christian, a Jew, a Parsee, and a Hindu if the founders of each of these religions preached the same gospel and showed the same path ? And why is it that the religion of Muhammad alone is known as Islam ? The answer is very straight and simple. There is not the least doubt about the fact that the founders of almost all religions preached the gospel of Islam—Oneness of God and Equality of Man ; but after their passing away, those who called

themselves as their followers drifted so far away from their real teachings that to all appearances their religion became a travesty of what they had taught and preached. To illustrate—Zoroaster, Jesus and Krishna all preached the two simple truisms, the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of Man. But after the founders of these religions had departed from this world, their followers drifted away from their teachings, and in the course of time their religions became associated with principles quite opposed to what they had preached. For example, soon after Zoroaster, the Zoroastrian priesthood invented the dualistic theory of Yazdan and Ahraman, one controlling the good and the other the evil. Christ preached the Unity of God in all its purity, but after him the church invented the strange doctrine of Trinity, three gods in one and one in three—a myth which still puzzles human understanding. Again Christ preached the brotherhood of man, but the church introduced the colour bar with the result that there are churches for the white and churches for the black. Simply by reason of his colour the black man is precluded from praying with the white man in his church. Again Shri Krishna preached the Unity of God and Equality of Man, but to-day Hinduism has devised hundreds of gods and is rent asunder into thousands of schisms of castes and creeds. In fact the most important political and social issue of the time which is attracting the attention not only of Indians but of the world at large is the question of Touchability and Untouchability,—a state of things devised by Hindu society which is now being deprecated by all classes alike.

Thus it is that in course of time all religions lost their original lustre and became a travesty of what their founders intended them to be. And it is, therefore, that when the Prophet Muhammad preached these simple truisms, his name became associated with the religion of Islam and he alone is known to be the founder of Islam.

THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

As already mentioned the two cardinal doctrines of Islam are the Unity of God and the Equality of Man. And this faith in the Unity of God and Brotherhood of Man with its corollary the belief in the prophethood of Muhammad, who preached these doctrines in most unequivocal and clear terms, is all that a man is required to believe to call himself a Muslim and to become a follower of Islam.

As to the practical side of Islam, a Muslim is required to do good and to abstain from evil. To attain this end, he is required to conform to certain practices by which alone a Muslim can be distinguished from the followers of other religions. They are—

1. Belief in the Unity of God and Prophethood of Muhammad.
2. Prayers.
3. Fasting.
4. Zakat (a poor-tax).
5. The Haj (pilgrimage).

(i). I need not dwell on the doctrine of the Unity of God and the Brotherhood of Man, as of late these doctrines have found universal approval. As regards the Prophethood of Muhammad, one who not only himself preached these doctrines, but recognised all those who preached them before him, surely must be one of them, a messenger of God. And this is all that Muhammad (God's mercy be on him) claims for himself.

(ii). As regards Islamic prayers, they are not only simple but appealing and useful. The object of prayer, according to Islam, is to stop man from evil things and shameful practices. A Muslim is required to pray five times a day. The pre-requisite for offering a prayer is purity of mind, purity of body and purity of clothes. A Muslim is required to keep his person clean of all impurities. Then cleanliness of clothes is strictly enjoined.

Before offering each prayer a Muslim is required to wash all the exposed parts of his body, *i.e.*, the hands up to elbows, the face, the back portion of the head and the feet up to ankles, at least three times each, and then alone is he considered to be in a fit state to offer prayers. The prayers are short, each taking from five to ten minutes. The first prayer is to be offered early in the morning before sunrise. Surely it is a good time for prayer and a necessary reminder to remember God and to begin the day's work in His name by invoking his blessings.

The next prayer comes off after midday when the sun begins to decline and man has finished half of his daily toils. He is again reminded of God, to seek his blessings and to abstain from evil, for it is likely that having been lost into worldly affairs he may forget his Lord.

The third prayer which comes in the afternoon marks the end of the day's labour and is a prayer of thanksgiving at the close of the day's work.

The fourth prayer is to be said at sunset, to sing the praises of God who brought the day to a glorious end.

The last prayer comes after sunset before retiring for rest.

Thus in the midst of prayer and remembrance of God passes the day of a Muslim's life, and thus is the Unity of God proclaimed at least five times a day by every Muslim.

The next most important feature of the Islamic prayer is that they are offered in congregation in mosques where no differences of status, colour or nationality exist. The king stands by the side of the slave and the rich by the side of the poor, and thus is the equality of man practically demonstrated five times every day.

(iii). The next practice to which a Muslim is required to conform is the fasting during the month of Ramadhan. I need hardly dwell on the advantages of fasting as this

THE PRINCIPLES OF ISLAM

institution is found in almost all religions of the world, and the recent fasting by the political thinkers of India and other countries has brought it into prominence of late. Fasting in the Muslim sense is the complete abstinence from food, water and all sorts of sensual pleasures and from evil deeds and ideas, from the break of dawn to sunset. The main object of fasting is the control of self and of the senses; and its practical importance lies in the fact that it demonstrates the equality of man by giving a practical idea of human miseries and sufferings in the form of the pangs of hunger and thirst. For thirty days in the year every Muslim from the king to the beggar, the rich and the poor alike has to remain hungry and thirsty. Thus is the equality of man enforced. Secondly, the rich learns by the actual practice what the pangs of hunger and thirst mean to his poor and destitute brother, and this invokes in his mind the virtue of charity and compassion for those who are not so well placed in life.

(iv). The forth institution is that of *zakat*, alms-giving. *Zakat* means the setting apart of one-fourtieth of your income at the close of every year for the benefit of the poor and the destitute. It is incumbent only on those who possess a certain measure of property. The *zakat* is to be distributed among the poor, the orphans and the destitutes. The giving of alms by the rich to the poor and the receiving of alms by the poor from the rich are not only ways of remembering God and of practicing piety but also most agreeable demonstrations of brotherly sympathy and love.

(v). The fifth and the last thing that a Muslim as such is required to do is to perform the Haj, the annual pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, provided there is safety of journey and that a man has means for travelling back and of supporting himself and all his dependents in the meanwhile. Only those who possess these facilities

are required to perform this duty. There, clad in a single garment, called the *Ahram*, the king and the peasant, the rich and the poor, the white and the black, the negroe and the European all assemble together and stand side by side before the Almighty, offering their prayers and proclaiming his Oneness and Omnipotence ; and demonstrating in a most practicable way the equality of man. There, no one can claim superiority over the other by reason of his birth, colour, nationality or country. There, superiority lies in superior devotion and superior service both to God and man.

This is the religion of Islam and this all that a man is required to do to become a Muslim.

THE WOKING ACTIVITIES

“What is Islam ?” a short article from the pen of the late Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din appears every month in our *Review*. It is also circulated in pamphlet form in thousands every year. The Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust publishes many pamphlets every year which deal with different aspects of Islam. Below we reproduce one of such pamphlets as we give to people who come from far and wide to visit the Shahjehan Mosque at Woking. During the last few months more than 600 persons visited the mosque. A visitors’ register is kept.

As newspaper publicity is beyond our reach at our present stage of development, we propose to broadcast these pamphlets by post to tens of thousands of people living in England. Financial assistance in the carrying out of this scheme will be gratefully acknowledged by the Financial Secretary of the Woking Muslim Mission and Literary Trust, Brandreth Road, Lahore, India. Suggestions from friends are most welcome.

ABDUL MAJID,
Imam of the Mosque, Woking, England.

THE WOKING ACTIVITIES

THE MOSQUE, ORIENTAL ROAD, WOKING, SURREY

1. Stands for the religion of Islam, popularly mis-named Mohammedanism (Islam, an Arabic word, literally means 'peace') the religion of all the prophets and founders, the last of whom was Muhammad, a prophet very much misunderstood in the West on account of prejudices dating from the time of the Crusades.
2. Welcomes friendly discussions on religious subjects, either by interview or correspondence.
3. Holds special lectures, open to everyone and members of all denominations every Sunday, at 3-15 p. m.
4. Keeps a stock of books for sale which throw light on the religion of the Holy Prophet Muhammad as well as that of the organised Church.
5. Publishes a monthly journal, *The Islamic Review*, dealing with Islamic subjects.
6. Welcomes visitors who wish to see the interior at any time during the day.

A FEW SALIENT FEATURES OF THE RELIGION OF ISLAM WHICH ARE NOT GENERALLY KNOWN

(a) It is absolutely monotheistic—no division in the Godhead—prayers are addressed directly to the Invisible God. Muhammad is as much a prophet of God as Jesus, Moses, etc., but like all other prophets before him, he is every bit a human being. Islam has neither ritual nor priesthood.

(b) It abhors warfare except in extreme cases of self-defence.

(c) The position it has given to woman is still unapproached by the laws of the most progressive nations of the modern world. According to Islam, there is no difference between man and woman—materially, spiritually and morally.

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(d) It is the only religious outlook on life which can grapple with the problems of Communism and Bolshevism.

(e) It is a widely-admitted and an unparalleled achievement of Islam, that it has created a world-wide brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of God.

(f) Islam alone has succeeded in abolishing all unconscionable barriers of distinction, nationality, colour and language.

ATTITUDE OF ISLAM TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS

‘Every nation had an apostle’ (the Qur-án, ch. 10, v. 47). No other religion but Islam recognises this truth.

SOME POPULAR MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

It is wrong to think :

that Islam was spread by the sword ;
that Islam is synonymous with polygamy ;
that, according to Islam, woman has no soul ;
and that the Islamic conception of Paradise is sensual.

THE CREED OF ISLAM

There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His apostle.

CORRESPONDENCE

CORRESPONDENCE

THE IMAM,

The Mosque, Woking.

LEEDS.

DEAR BROTHER IN ISLAM,

Assalamo Alaikum,

I am extremely sorry that circumstances have not yet permitted me to travel to London and make your personal acquaintance. I have now been over a year in my adopted faith, and I would like to say that in proportion as my knowledge of Islam increases, my conviction and sincerity rise to greater heights. I celebrated my anniversary by writing to the Vicar of the Church where I was baptized, confirmed and received communion, telling him that I no longer believed in the tenets of the Christian faith. I had taken the only possible step and embraced a religion which coincided with my views, namely, Islam. Of course, the reverend gentleman did not reply to my letter.

I am enclosing herewith a copy of the article which appeared in the *Daily Express* of last Saturday, June 10th.¹ Perhaps it may interest you if you have not seen it. Although there are one or two points both inaccurate and offensive. I think it shows a great advance on the usual trash which is served up to the English public on this subject.

Hoping to have the pleasure of meeting you shortly.

Fi amán Allah,

Yours fraternally,
SALIM R. DE GREY FIRTH.

¹ [A reply was written to the *Daily Express* which appeared in its issue for 13th June 1933. We reproduce it. Our readers will be glad to know that this letter elicited a good many enquiries from all over England.—ED. I. R.]

THE EDITOR,

The Daily Express, London.

As a Muslim, I read with close attention Mr. F. Owen's article, "What 200,000,000 People Believe."

I would point to one gross misrepresentation which I believe, Mr. Owen made simply because he has never been told the truth or because he never had access to authentic translations of the Holy Qur-án. He is decidedly wrong when he asserts "women have no equality with men."

This is exactly the opposite of the teachings of the Qur-án. The Qur-án makes no difference between men and women—morally, spiritually, or materially.

ABDUL MAJID (IMAM),
The Shah Jehan Mosque, Woking.

The Chairman of the Islamic Society of Colon, the Republic of Panama, in one of his recent letters to the Imam, the Mosque, Woking, says :—

"For your information it is well to mention here that Islam is beginning to take a firmer stand in these parts than in previous

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years and I am looking to the day not so far off when we shall be able to erect a house of prayer in this country. There can be no gainsaying the fact that a mosque is most requisite in a country such as this (the world's gate-way) and Muslims the world over should answer the appeal whenever we make it."

THE IMAM,
The Mosque, Woking.
DEAR BROTHER IN ISLAM,

WITTERSHAM,
SUSSEX.

Peace be on you,

I am in receipt of your kind letter which I hardly know how to answer.

Thank you for your spiritual encouragement, which, I must tell you, means a great deal to me here. But above all I thank you for receiving me into the great brotherhood of Islam. Praise be to Allah.

Please let me know the name, etc., of the kind friend who is going to send me, my soul's desire, a copy of the Holy Qur-án, that I may express gratitude to him. How different a spirit to that demonstrated by materialistic Christianity. How the world is in need of Islam. I live for the destruction of this horrible caste-system (Christianity) which is slowly strangling my country, and I live for Islam, the Deliverer.

It is up to us all in whatever part of the country we live to see that the Torch does not go out.

Yours in the Faith,
A. M. T.

THE IMAM,
The Mosque, Woking.
DEAR SIR,

STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN.

I am so thankful for all the literature (letter and books). It has given me great pleasure. The Islamic religion is just what I have been wishing for ; it is so easy to understand, so natural and beautiful. I have read it over and over again, I know it can't be anything but wonderful and good for me to study it, especially as my own religion has been impossible for me to believe. I never could believe that anyone could die for people's sins. I always believed that Jesus was one of the greatest and best persons that ever lived, one of the prophets. How can it be possible that we, if we could not believe that Jesus had died for us, should be lost for ever ? I have been thinking of the multitude of people having other beliefs. How could it be possible that God who is love should be so cruel ? I know He is not so. I think religion is necessary for happiness and every one who can believe in his religion and daily study and

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think and wish to do what is right and ask God to help him, and really believe and know that God can do anything that he thinks is best for him, to leave everything with God and to live after the golden rule, anyway to try hard to do so, is safe and can be happy. I like to learn and to think by studying the religion of Islam and be happy in my belief. Therefore I ask you to please send me an English translation of the Holy Qur-án and also "Object of the Religion" and "Articles of the Faith in Islam," also "Islam the Religion of Peace" and perhaps some other with beautiful thoughts for every day use with advice.

Yours sincerely,

R. B.

—
MOMBASA.

THE EDITOR,
Islamic Review, Woking.

DEAR SIR,

I am once again able to subscribe to the *Islamic Review*. Do please send me the *Islamic Review* regularly. I love this paper more than any other, and used to so much look forward to its reaching me.

You once sent me a small Book of Prayers, this was stolen from me some time ago, do please send me another one, and if possible, some small books on Islam, the Sayings of Muhammad, Time of Fasting, and similar books. I also wish to obtain a copy of the Qur-án.

I sincerely wish to become a true Muslim, for many years my thoughts and heart have been Muslim, and I felt compelled to write to you on the matter to-day. Please let me know if there is any way in which I can become a Muslim, for I, Arthur C. Hammond, son of G. Hammond, deceased, do hereby faithfully and solemnly declare of my own free will that I adopt Islam as my religion, that I worship the One and only Allah (God) alone, that I believe Muhammad to be His messenger, and servant, that I respect equally all Prophets, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, etc., that I will live a Muslim life by the help of Allah.

Oh, I want help to this end, I am often talking to various Muslims here, and tell them that I, also, am a Muslim. They ask, what proof have I that I am a Muslim? What can I say? What proof can I show? I have none.

I have lived so long in Mombasa and am well-known here, can you put me into communication with any really good Muslim here. Any reading matter, information, prayers, times of fasting, would be most acceptable to

Yours very sincerely,

A. HAMMOND.

THE HOLY QUR-ÁN
AND ITS INTRODUCTION

BY THE LATE KHWAJA KAMAL-UD-DIN

(Continued from Vol. XXI, page 215.)

CHAPTER II.

The first four sections are worthy of a Book that comes to carry humanity to the acme of its progress. To begin with, it lays down six principles of a successful life. It warns us against the attitude that will surely bring man to failure. It then speaks of such of our ways that will produce disastrous results if not amended. It not only speaks of our high capabilities, but it gives us the most exalted position one can think of in the highest flight of imagination. It declares that we have been created as the Lieutenant of God on this earth and rule the whole nature as far as it is possible in our earthly sojourn. Again it gives us a partial insight into Divine character. God, of course, is transcendental and unconceivable, but the Qur-án gives us some of its attributes with which we have to adorn our ways. One has only to consider these Holy names, and he will not find a single desirable thing that does not come within their scope.

God is All-Powerful, but the Holy Qur-án would speak of Him in a way that may make Him our possible prototype. The Book makes mention of Divine splendour and grandeur but here again it keeps the same objects in view—the said dignity and glory may partly be owned by us. For instance, we read the following in the “Throne Verse” in the Book :—

Allah is, He besides Whom there is no God, the Living, the Self-subsisting, by Whom all subsist ; slumber does not overtake Him, nor sleep ; whatever is in the Heaven and whatever is in the

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earth is His ; who is he that can intercede with Him but by His permission ; He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases ; His power extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them both tires Him not, and He is the most High, the Great.

The verse puts before us the best model of glory and grandeur. We should be matchless in our ways. We, no doubt, cannot live for ever or be self-subsistence, but we should live in a way that we may leave behind us an immortal name and be able to help others.

For this, first of all, we should ever remain vigilant. Sleeping is undoubtedly a life tendency, but we should take notice of our environments in such a way as if sleep did not ever overtake us. We should master the secrets of heaven and earth that may enable us to rule Nature ; we should do justice and equity to others, we should discourage undeserved favour so much so that no one dare come to us with some intercession. We may make exceptions in some deserving cases. Our knowledge should extend to things around us so that we may be able to bring them under our power. We should not allow others to have the knowledge of our ways but with our permission.

We should wield our power in a possible manner on things lying in heaven and earth, and in doing so we should never feel tired.

Prophets are the best pictures of the Lord, yet the Qur-án does not describe their life in a way that may not come within the frontiers of our imitations, besides they came here to act as exemplars to us. They are often beset with insurmountable difficulties. But let other Books paint them as Working Wonders to meet such exigencies, but the Qur-án would have them solve the situation in a manner which can also be accomplished by a man of high attainments. Moses may save his people

by a miracle in crossing the sea and get his enemies drowned in it. But Muhammad had a more arduous task when he was besieged in Medina by ten thousand enemies : he would not resort to any miracle. He did what a capable general would be proud to do in the battlefield. The Book has no doubt spoken of various wonderful feats. When referring to certain events in the life of some prophets, it referred to that special knowledge of the secrets of Nature that God gave his blessed people on that occasion which enabled them to do the needful, as in the case of Moses when he crossed the sea.

The Qur-án thus suggests that we should try to acquire the knowledge which He gave to those prophets in times of difficulties. To-day science has enabled us to locate rocks underlying water, in mountains, it has enabled us also to have full knowledge of the tides when certain portions of the sea become dry and fordable. No one can deny the Almighty powers of God to do anything that may even imaginably seem to be impossible. Everything that comes from Him speaks volumes of His miraculous powers. They are signs and indications of His existence. Each and everything baffles our imagination even to find out His ways of making them. A weed of a grass is a better miracle than any feat performed by any man on this earth. All the Messengers came to guide us in our ways of life, how could they be exemplars to us if we were unable to do miracles in our life. We read of them in days of yore, but we hardly come across any person possessed of such a gift. All the miracles I read in Qur-án are the miracles of knowledge, a knowledge that was given to those prophets at the time of emergency though they did not possess it before ; nor any of their compeers did so. Of course they were wonderful works of knowledge, they guide us to acquire such knowledge, may it be scientific or occult, and enable us to perform similar deeds. Auto-sug-

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gestion in our days has given eyes to many who had become blind. It gave speech to dumb and power of walking to lame persons. The said science is doing almost all the works reported of Christ excepting his bringing dead people to life again.

I do not make much of the so called laws of Nature which, as some people say, would not allow any man to do anything contrary to their demands, but I do object to believe in a thing which goes against the ways of God mentioned in clearest terms in His Revelations. For instance, there is a verse in the Qur-án which makes it prohibitive for those who leave the world once to come again over here. The said verse has also been explained by the Prophet himself, as a tradition in Bukhari goes to bear the same meaning. How can a mortal being re-vivify a dead body, if it has not pleased our Lord Himself to bring the dead again to life on this earth as the tradition says ? Of course we read of such events in the Qur-án as seem to speak of similar resurrections, but the Book uses the same words to mean spiritual resurrection and not a physical revival. The Arabic language gives such meaning to them also. Where was the difficulty for the Lord to bring departed souls to this earth if He will resurrect the whole dead world on the Last Day ! But the verse under consideration prohibits such an event, hence I am compelled to deny Jesus and other Prophets to possess such powers. The Biblical record is more or less a folklore, it was prepared on hearsay. It only gives the impressions of those who were around Jesus, and who, according to his own sayings, were men of weak intellect. They could hardly distinguish between resuscitation and resurrection.

SECTION 5.

The Book next speaks of the Jews who are a typical example both of the blessed and of those who afterwards came under Divine wrath. They were once the chosen

people of God and the recipients of His choicest blessings, but by reason of their iniquities they forfeited the Divine favour. After they had come out of Egypt God spoke to them through Moses as they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai that towered over their heads, and certain covenants were made between them and God. He undertook to give them laws for the promotion of righteousness and earthly happiness, and to bless them if they should obey these laws faithfully. But their history is a record of constant disobedience and obstinacy. Every now and again they were forgiven, but only to sin again, more grievously than before. They were twice expelled from their promised land, firstly, by Nebuchadnezzar and then by Titus; they lost all temporal power before the advent of the Holy Prophet. They had, however, been promised the restoration of their lost power, if they would 'hearken' to the Prophet who should be raised among the Ishmaelites, their brethren. It was the concluding but the most important portion of the Covenant.¹ In the hour of their distress the promised Prophet² appeared in the person of Muhammad who reminded them of the Covenant which should again bring them under God's favour if they would but fulfil their part of it. The case of the Prophet was not a doubtful one. The Arab traditions and the Book of Deuteronomy were so clear on the point that it was not difficult to identify the subject of the prophecy, but their wilfulness and racial prejudices would not allow them to accept him, so they were his first rejectors. Moreover, they received various favours from the enemies of the Prophet—the Arab disbelievers—of whom they were afraid, and so they concealed the truth. But the Qur-án warned them that they should not accept a price for hiding the communication of God; they should rather fear Him and no one else, and should not confound truth with falsehood when reading the Book. They were also bidden to

¹Deut. 18.²v. 40.

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keep up their prayers and do good deeds so that the Lord may reveal to them the realities of the things. It would not become them, the Qur-án further argued, to enjoin righteousness on others while they themselves committed sin in concealing the truth in their Book.

The Israelites had doubtless read in their scriptures of the dignity and splendour of the One that was to come, while the Arabian Prophet was at that time hemmed in and hard-pressed by his foes. The people of the Book, therefore, were asked to have patience and await, with prayers, for the time when the Holy Prophet should triumph over his enemies. But this was a hard thing for them to do, and could be done only by those who were humble and understood how to get benefit from the ways of the *Rabb* (Lord).

The phrase in verse 46 is to *meet* their Lord. *Rabb* is the original word for the Lord under Whose providence events take place not all of a sudden, but gradually. Everything in Nature follows the same course. In the case of the Prophet's victory, this was not to be achieved in a day or two, but it had to take time to bring the thing gradually to completion. So the Arabic expression, 'to meet their Lord,' mean to be benefitted by the ways of God, Who perfects His works by a gradual process which naturally demands patience on our part in waiting for the result.

SECTION 6.

The same subject is dealt with as regards certain details in this Section as in the former. To begin with, the Section alludes to that Divine favour which enabled the Israelites to excel all other nations of the world in wordly possessions. From the depths of subjection and servitude under the Egyptians, they were raised to a height of splendour that would be envied by the great powers of the present day. The kingdom of Solomon extended from Northern

Syria up to Yemen and Hazarmouth, including portions of Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia. He had brought some of the mighty nations under his sway. The dignity of his palace showed the highest skill of the craftsman. He caused a wonderful tank to be made before his palace to receive the Queen of Sheba, the surface of which was so cunningly covered with glass as to deceive the princess who mistook the glass for water. Though a work of art it was yet made for certain high purposes mentioned elsewhere in the Qur-án.

The court of Solomon was the scene of culture, art and industry, and there were men there who cultivated both their physical and occult power to a marvellous extent. The Queen of Sheba possessed a throne of unique beauty, but the workmen of the Court could make an imitation of it with such skill that the Queen herself could not distinguish between the original and the copy. The fabulous throne of Solomon himself that used to fly through the air was only a piece of aircraft. His proverbs as given in the Bible and his reputation for wisdom refer rather to the extent of the learning possessed by his people.

The Qur-án has detailed these things to give its readers an idea of the greatness enjoyed by the Israelites in their palmy days. But extravagance and self-indulgence, with wilful violation of the law, soon led them to exceed the limit. So, in the long run, they lost their temporal power with all other vestiges of dignity and became scattered in different countries, where they held a subordinate position. In these days of their misery, they often remembered of the promised Prophet that was to appear among their brethren to restore to them their lost glory. The promised one appeared at this juncture in the person of Muhammad, but they would not acknowledge him on account of their pride and racial prejudices, though their own books pointed to him unmistakably. They,

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however, were warned of an impending calamity of a sterner sort that would come upon them to punish them for their contumacy in rejecting the Prophet. They used to pray for his coming, but when he appeared, they turned their backs on him. It was not a mere threat to serve the needs of the moment that the Qur-án spoke of, for the coming events were to prove the prophesied punishment almost in the very words of the Qur-án. The world was full of similar prophecies but not one of them, even that of the second coming of Jesus, was free from oracular mystery. The Qur-ánic prophecy, on the other hand, depicts the coming events in colours too vivid to mislead anyone. It speaks of the time when the Jews shall be doomed to wander from place to place, with no refuge anywhere. They will be imprisoned often, and there will be none to ransom them. Vicissitude and hardship will be theirs, but there will be no one to intercede on their behalf.

The Book gives a summary of the Divine favours which have from time to time been conferred on the Jews, and their continued disobedience to every law. It refers to their abject condition under their Egyptian bondage, how they even descended to killing their male children, and sparing their female, till God came to redeem them from their trouble. History records no other event of a similar nature, the deliverance of a nation from slavery in such a wonderful manner and in so short a time. In twenty-four hours the children of the bondage of generations were released for ever, and their tyrant master drowned in the sea. All this could only be through Divine agency. After the Exodus the Israelites were accorded the greatest favours. God granted Moses an audience for forty days, but his people gave themselves to idolatry in his absence and worshipped the golden calf. Still they were pardoned, and Moses was given a portion of the Book, and signs of distinctions for the guidance of his people.

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The word used for distinctions is *Furqan*, it means anything that may distinguish between right and wrong. Some commentators take its meaning to be a matter of distinction between the people of wickedness and those on the right path.¹

Torah was in itself a distinction. The word also has been used as a name of the Qur-án elsewhere, but Moses wanted to stamp out idolatry from among his people, and so he ordered the ringleaders to be put to death. The Qur-án does not enter into the details of the events, but the Bible speaks of sanguinary doings in words which seem to bear no relation to the Lord of mercy. The Levites under Divine orders, slew thousands of men by way of punishment and even women and children. The Jews then committed a further piece of impudence. They asked Moses to show them their God so that they might see Him with their naked eyes, but a great storm of thunder and lightning overtook them, stunning them and making them as though dead, but they afterwards regained their senses.

At the time they were travelling through the hot valley of the Hedjaz, and God, of His grace, used to send clouds from day to day to protect them from the severity of the heat, since they were not used to it. The Qur-án tells of an event, well within the experience of men of saintly character, but the credulous writers of the Bible must need narrate a curious occurrence in this connection. In Exodus 13 : 21, for full forty years the Jews travelled through and about this valley, and every day a pillar of cloud appeared, which not only acted as a guide to them in their journey,

¹ The Bible writers, with their usual leanings to the bizarre, give us here a very strange story, what the Qur-án makes a common incident. (Exodus, 19: 16, 17.) No doubt we read of death overtaking them on seeing the sight, if we translate verse 56 literally. The word *murt* literally meaning death also means deprivation; moreover, we read of the same incident in chap. 7: 155, where it is told that a deep stupor like death overtook the companions of Moses. The verse concludes with the words "that you may give thanks." Such a calamity would be cause enough for any people to remain grateful to the Lord for ever, but the Jews remained still stubborn in wrong-doing. In the next verse, the Qur-án collects evidence to show that it was owing to their utter disregard of the Lord's favours that they came under His wrath at last. (Read verse 57).

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but at night gave them light. For their food they were provided with quails and manna—a kind of very small corn, sweet in taste—that fell from the sky like dew-drops. Recently, a similar phenomenon was observed in the region of Durban, South Africa. The word used for these gifts of God is very suggestive. *Salwa*, the word corresponding to quails, comes from a root meaning satisfactory. *Manna* literally means anything that comes as a gift. The very words show that these things came to the Jews as a gift of God and were sufficient to satisfy their needs, but they soon became ungrateful.

A city came in their path, which the Bible calls Shittim.¹ They were ordered to enter it with all meekness and humility of mind, asking pardon for their sins, and praying the Lord to enable them to shake off their sins from them, as is shown by the word *Hitta*, the word used in the text. The book here draws a most important moral. It says that the grace of the Lord comes only to those who are humble and righteous, but the Jews would not do as they were told, and deliberately went against the Divine instruction. The Qur-án is silent as to the nature of the wrong they did in the town, but the Bible says that they committed whoredom² with the Moabite girls who lived there.

A plague overtook them, which killed some twenty-four thousand people.

The word *Hitta* used in the verse 58 is said to have been thus explained by the Holy Prophet. He said to his followers:—“ Say, We ask forgiveness of Allah and turn to Him penitently ” and then he added “ This is, to be sure, the ‘ *Hitta-tun* ’ which the Israelites were commanded to say.”

In the same verse there is another Arabic idiom which means humility : “ And enter the gate with obeisance.”

¹ Numbers 25 : 1.

² Numbers 25 : 1—3.

It conveys that they should behave in the town with humility of mind and submissiveness to God as these are the ways to merit His blessings.

After referring to the pestilence the Book says that the disaster came to them on account of their transgression. The two verses, therefore, establish this universal principle that felicity and adversity do not come to any person as belonging to this or that nationality, but rather as the fruits of good and evil. After making mention of further blessings and adversities in Section 7, the golden principle is laid down in the beginning of Section 8.

SECTION 7.

The Jews, who at that time were travelling in the desert, a dry part of the valley, suffered much from want of water and asked Moses to pray to the Lord for it. He was ordered to remove a certain rock there by striking it with his rod. This he did, and the water gushed out into twelve channels according to the number of tribes. There was nothing curious in this. Springs naturally become divided into various branches, or the Jews themselves might have divided the water into streams or runnels to facilitate drinking. The Jews were a corrupt nation and have again here received further warning against doing wrong and making mischief. The book, in verse 61, speaks of another Jewish mistake. They could not appreciate or understand the Divine object in keeping them away from city life and making them pass their days in the barren valley. They had recently emerged from the life of ignorance imposed on them by their slavery in Egypt. They had no knowledge of manners or good behaviour, so necessary for independent civic life, and, uncouth as they were, they would certainly have fallen an easy prey to a more civilized life and have become slaves again. So they were kept in the wilderness where they were gradually taught the ethics of civic life. They must have something to meet

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the requirements of the body, and they were given the best food available there in the form of *manna* and quails ; but they used to eat other things detailed in the verse when in Egypt. These things were available in towns, but life in towns was, at that time, dangerous to the Israelites. But their gluttony would not permit them to see how the case really stood. They persistently urged Moses to make a change. God therefore permitted them to enter any city, and have their desires satisfied. In fact, they preferred evil to good. They had entered into a city and been reduced to serfdom. But the Lord intended to raise up a martial race of kings and rulers from among these menials, so He put them in the valley as if under tuition, but they preferred the lower life and went after it.

The text uses the word *Maskanat* and *Zillat* which have been translated as “ abasement and humiliation.” The word *Maskanat* literally means dispossession of property, especially of land, and the word *Zillat* means subjection to a foreign rule, which was a natural consequence of their own conduct when the Jews went to live in a city in the then condition of their morals. The verse summarizes in two or three words their subsequent life ; it was a life of absolute unrighteousness. They continually did wicked things and transgressed every law of God. They would not heed the words of the Lord, but slew the Teachers—the Prophets whom He sent. Such a life of indulgence was sure to bring them under the Divine wrath, because it is not our antecedents, racial or of the family, that can win the favour of the Lord, but our actions have to decide our fate. The next verse therefore lays down a rule before it proceeds with the history of the Jews.

SECTION 8.

Before the advent of Islam every nation was proud of its superiority over others. Not only the Jews but the

Hindus too thought much of their own race, and unfortunately there are Muslims who cherish a similar opinion. The Qur-án made a departure from all other religions in this respect. It exposed the falsity and danger of the wrong view. It gave precedence to personal conduct, thus destroying aristocratic feelings and established the basic principle of democracy. It declared that it was immaterial in the eye of God whether a person was a Muslim, a Jew, a Christian or a Sabean.¹ It was his true belief in God and the Last Day and his own good actions that would enable him to find his reward from his *Rabb*—He Who maintains us and brings all our faculties to perfection. The best of rewards which we can have from our *Rabb* for our actions is the development of all that lies hidden within us in the shape of our capacities. The verse uses two other words full of meaning. To be free from *fear* and *grief* is the best blessing which one can have. In all our life we are beset either by fear or grief, in the course of our business we are in constant fear of some mishap, and if anything goes wrong, we give way to grief. The Qur-án assures us that those who observe three things—belief in God and the Last Day and good actions will be free of both fear and grief. Good actions are the main thing, but they mean that we must lead a life according to the will of the Lord; for we cannot live for a moment if we go against His laws. If we have to do good actions we must believe in God since all good actions come from Him. Belief in the hereafter is the natural outcome of our own strong belief in the consequences of our actions. We cannot look for the immediate result of our deeds, we must wait to see what it may be; on the other hand, belief in a reward to come spurs mankind to act. It is belief in the hereafter, therefore, that brings all our actions into play.

¹ Sabean, a Zoroastrian, but some commentators say that they were people who resembled Christians and Jews in their beliefs.

INTRODUCTION TO HOLY QUR-ÁN

After laying down this maxim for a prosperous life, the Book resumes its story. It reminds the Israelites of the covenants between God and themselves when they were standing at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is only expressing the idea in an intensified form when the Qur-án says that the mountain was raised over their head. The covenant was given to guide them to a life of success, but they often turned their backs on the Divine injunction, while the merciful Lord forgave them over and over again. Yet their stubbornness increased. They violated every order and exulted in their sins. The observance of the Sabbath was ordained for them as a reminder of their religious duties. The Muslim institution of five daily prayers serves the same purpose in Islam, but the Jews, and the Christians after them, have made of these sacred institutions a *reductio ad absurdum*. Instead of reviewing their actions of the past week on the Sabbath day, in order to see how far these had been consistent with the Divine Will, and then to make amends in case of default, they began to observe Sabbath by leading an idle life. Doubtless they would observe the ceremony of prayer as a formality, but they would do no work the whole day long. They thus lost the chance of reforming and increased in their transgressions. Their condition has been briefly referred to by the Qur-án when it says that they exceeded all the limits of the Sabbath idea. They indulged in a life of iniquity and became despised everywhere. This disgrace was the fruit of their own actions, but as it occurred under the Divine laws of causation, the Book always describes it as the action of the Lord. It is to give us a most emphatic lesson, as I said before, that no action of our own will remain without its consequences. Man contains within himself all the passions of the animal kingdom. If any of them becomes a ruling passion in him, he is a true representative of whatever brute it may be. Malice, jealousy, avarice, mimicking and adultery are the chief

passions for which a monkey is notorious in the East. The Jews in their days of self-indulgence were the personification of the monkey, but curiosity would lead some people to think that the Jews of the time of which I am speaking became metamorphosed into the shape of the animal in question. But the Book clearly states that this occurred in order to serve as "an example to those who witnessed it and those who came after it, and an admonition to those who are righteous." How could they be example to us who "came afterward" if we fail to find any metamorphosed species?

The next five verses disclose another phase of Jewish stubbornness. They sometimes sought to evade the observance of an order by dilatoriness. They remained the slaves of the Egyptians for generations, and naturally became idolaters following the example of their masters, who worshipped their god in the shape of a cow or a cat. Cow-worship was very popular among them, and in order to destroy this sort of polytheism in them, they were commanded to slay a cow or a heifer on several occasions. But still they evinced the same evil tendency. Whenever they saw a cow of some unusual form, they looked upon it with reverence, as do the Hindus. In the days of Moses, there was a beautiful heifer of a fair golden colour in the Jewish herd. They naturally began to regard it as something which one day might become an object of worship. In order to nip this inclination in the bud, Moses, under Divine inspiration, ordered the Jews to make of it a sacrifice. They knew well what Moses had in mind, but they tried to evade the order, and made several excuses as to the identity of the calf. Ultimately they had to kill it as verse 71 shows, but they did so unwillingly.

(To be continued).

WHAT IS ISLAM ?

WHAT IS ISLAM ?

The following is a very brief account of Islam, and some of its teachings. For further details, please write to the IMAM of the Mosque, Woking, Surrey, England.

ISLAM, THE RELIGION OF PEACE.—The word Islam literally means: (1) Peace ; (2) the way to achieve peace ; (3) submission ; as submission to another's will is the safest course to establish peace. The word in its religious sense signifies complete submission to the Will of God.

OBJECT OF THE RELIGION.—Islam provides its followers with the perfect code whereby they may work out what is noble and good in man, and thus maintain peace between man and man.

THE PROPHET OF ISLAM.—Muhammad, popularly known as the Prophet of Islam, was, however, the last Prophet of the Faith. Muslims, *i.e.*, the followers of Islam, accept all such of the world's Prophets, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, as revealed the Will of God for the guidance of humanity.

THE QUR-ÁN.—The Gospel of the Muslim is the Qur-án. Muslims believe in the Divine origin of every other sacred book, inasmuch as all such previous revelations have become corrupted through human interpolation, the Qur-án, the last book of God, came as a recapitulation of the former Gospels.

ARTICLES OF FAITH IN ISLAM.—These are seven in number : belief in (1) Allah ; (2) Angels ; (3) Books from God ; (4) Messengers from God ; (5) the Hereafter ; (6) the Premeasurement of good and evil ; (7) Resurrection after death.

The life after death, according to Islamic teaching, is not a new life, but only a continuance of this life, bringing its hidden realities into light. It is a life of unlimited progress ; those who qualify themselves in this life for the progress will enter into Paradise, which is another name for the said progressive life after death, and those who get their faculties stunted by their misdeeds in this life will be the denizens of the Hell—a life incapable of appreciating heavenly bliss, and of torment—in order to get themselves purged of all impurities and thus to become fit for the life in Heaven. State after death is an image of the spiritual state in this life.

The sixth article of faith has been confused by some with what is popularly known as Fatalism. A Muslim neither believes in Fatalism nor Predestination ; he believes in Premeasurement. Everything created by God is for good in the given use and under the given circumstances. Its abuse is evil and suffering.

PILLARS OF ISLAM.—These are five in number: (1) declaration of faith in the Oneness of God, and in the Divine Messengership of Muhammad ; (2) Prayer ; (3) Fasting ; (4) Almsgiving ; (5) Pilgrimage to the Holy Shrine at Mecca.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.—The Muslims worship One God—the Almighty, the All-Knowing, the All-Just, the Cherisher of All the

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Worlds, the Friend, the Guide, the Helper. There is none like Him. He has no partner. He is neither begotten nor has He begotten any son or daughter. He is Indivisible in Person. He is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth, the Merciful, the Compassionate, the Glorious, the Magnificent, the Beautiful, the Eternal, the Infinite, the First and the Last.

FAITH AND ACTION.—Faith without action is a dead letter. Faith by itself is insufficient, unless translated into action. A Muslim believes in his own personal accountability for his actions in this life and in the hereafter. Each must bear his own burden, and none can expiate for another's sin.

ETHICS OF ISLAM.—“Imbue yourself with Divine Attributes,” says the noble Prophet. God is the prototype of man, and His Attributes form the basis of Muslim ethics. Righteousness in Islam consists in leading a life in complete harmony with the Divine Attributes. To act otherwise is sin.

CAPABILITIES OF MAN IN ISLAM.—The Muslim believes in the inherent sinlessness of man's nature, which, made of the goodliest fibre is capable of unlimited progress, setting him above the angels, and leading him to the border of Divinity.

THE POSITION OF WOMAN IN ISLAM.—Man and woman come from the same essence, possess the same soul, and they have been equipped with equal capability for intellectual, spiritual and moral attainments. Islam places man and woman under the like obligations, the one to the other.

EQUALITY OF MANKIND AND THE BROTHERHOOD OF ISLAM.—Islam is the religion of the Unity of God and the equality of mankind. Lineage, riches and family honours are accidental things; virtue and the service of humanity are the matters of real merit. Distinctions of colour, race and creed are unknown in the ranks of Islam. All mankind is of one family, and Islam has succeeded in welding the black and the white into one fraternal whole.

PERSONAL JUDGMENT.—Islam encourages the exercise of personal judgment and respects difference of opinion, which, according to the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, is a blessing of God.

KNOWLEDGE.—The pursuit of knowledge is a duty in Islam, and it is the acquisition of knowledge that makes men superior to angels.

SANCTITY OF LABOUR.—Every labour which enables man to live honestly is respected. Idleness is deemed a sin.

CHARITY.—All the faculties of man have been given to him as a trust from God, for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. It is man's duty to live for others, and his charities must be applied without any distinction of persons. Charity in Islam brings man nearer to God. Charity and the giving of alms have been made obligatory, and every person who possesses property above a certain limit has to pay a tax, levied on the rich for the benefit of the poor.